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ABSTRACT

This paper, presented at the Seminar on Involvement of Youth in Community, National 4-H Center, Chevy Chase, Maryland on January 17, 1972, points out the continued interest and national activity concerning rural development. The responsibility of the Extension Service to carry out educational community development programs with adults and youth is emphasized. Greater involvement of youth in community affairs and, in particular, in 4-H clubs is urged. The need for young people's ideas at the national level as well as in the states is expressed. (NF)

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THE NATIONAL CLIMATE FOR INVOLVING YOUTH IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

by

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It is a pleasure for me to meet with you this afternoon and review what I consider to be a favorable national climate for increased youth involvement in community development.

I'm sure you were all delighted when President Nixon announced the decision to retain a viable Department of Agriculture at a cabinet level. Our new Secretary, Dr. Earl Butz, has said that USDA will continue to be concerned with farmers and all rural people and their quality of life.

To quote from a statement by the Secretary before the American Farm Bureau Federation - "I am for rural development and economic growth in the countryside so that farmers and rural townspeople can enjoy schools, health care, housing and community services that are on a par with larger cities. I'm for the kind of strong, local, private economic activity that will generate the growth and the vitality that will make this possible."

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There continues to be great interest and much activity nationally concerning rural development. Such important developments as the USDA-State-local Rural Development Committees; the President's Task Force report, "A New Life for the Country"; Title IX of the Agricultural Act of 1970; the new Senate Subcommittee on Rural Development and the Coalition for Rural America are a few of the indicators of this interest.

There are many legislative proposals before the Congress on the direction and policy which the rural development effort should take. Yet, despite all the pronouncements, searching, interest, activity and attention, no clear-cut national policy has yet emerged. Regardless of the outcome, it is expected that USDA will continue to take the leadership for rural development at the national level.

We in Extension have a responsibility to carry out our educational community development programs with adults and youth. The Extension Service and all State Extension Directors are looking into every

opportunity to expand community development work within Extension. As an indicator of this concern, ECOP at its November meeting in New Orleans recommended that Congress authorize and fund a system of Institutes for Rural Development at each land-grant university. These institutes would contain both research and extension components.

Societal changes during the decade of the '60s have indicated the need for youth-serving agencies to expand opportunities during the decade of the '70s. 4-H has accepted that challenge.

With recommendations from "A People and a Spirit" and the expressed concerns of youth themselves as a background, a significant document - 4-H in the '70s - has emerged. Administrators in ES and in every State are 100 percent in support of the 4-H in the '70s program and the steps it recommends to strengthen the Cooperative Extension 4-H-Youth program.

We are always concerned about the need for program balance in all our Extension educational programs and particularly in community development and youth programs. We know we cannot possibly be all things to

all people. We need to limit the scope of program assistance because of always limited resources. But the limitation should be in the range of program categories we make available, not in the variety of audience served.

As public employees, we have an obligation to assure that all segments of society have the right to participate in Extension programs regardless of income and educational levels, and regardless of race, color, creed, sex, or national origin. Perhaps there is one other thing we should add: All segments should also have the right to participate regardless of age. That is, youth, despite their age, should have the opportunity to participate in all of our programs, including our community development efforts.

I fully support this effort to involve youth in community development. All units of Extension should want to contribute to this effort -- agriculture, home economics and others -- as well as 4-H youth and community development staffs.

As we look at what we are now doing to involve youth in community development programs, there is an

impressive amount of work being done. In the Extension Service report on 4-H youth involvement in community development, prepared in response to the Secretary of Agriculture's memorandum asking all USDA agencies for such information, we reported that, "Youth throughout the nation are joining hands with adult volunteer 4-H leaders and others in Cooperative Extension in expanding and launching new programs in community development and environmental improvement. Nearly all of the 93,000 organized 4-H Clubs annually include in their program of activities some form of community involvement and service. More than 235,000 youth enrolled in 4-H community study and service projects in Fiscal Year 1971."

4-H has demonstrated in most State programs that young people and adults can effectively work together in community development. You'll be hearing more about the program approaches to youth involvement in community development from some of these States later in this seminar.

"We Care" has been a popular theme among 4-H and youth organizations served by Extension all over the country. More than a slogan, youth in virtually every State have demonstrated that they care about their

communities. They care about jobs and career development, environmental improvement, health and safety, government and public affairs and the disadvantaged (for whatever reason). They have taken part in leadership development activities and become involved in community activities.

It is evident that Extension has made some encouraging starts. Still, we have only scratched the surface of the great potential input youth can make in the community development thrust.

Community development now claims a rather modest percentage of all Extension resources nationally (about 8 percent according to EMIS figures). Involvement of youth in this work, in turn, is apparently a small amount of this increasing effort.

Extension has a responsibility to assist youth as well as adults to understand community systems and the decisionmaking process and to become better informed citizens about their communities. Youth want to learn about their community -- how it works. They are also concerned about some of the things they see happening in their communities. We should help them to articulate

these concerns and help them to become involved with their parents and other adults in shaping the kinds of communities in which they want to live.

There has been much emphasis on the differences between the generations in America. There has been too much of a tendency for the older generation to blame all of the younger generation for the excesses of a violent and irresponsible few. Youth's voice in community decisions and community actions must and will be heard. The wishes and desires of young people should be considered with the wishes and desires of other segments and age groups within our society.

Many are urging a greater voice -- a truer involvement -- for youth in community affairs. Endorsement of the idea has come from the White House, among other places. In his talk to the delegates attending the 50th Anniversary 4-H Congress last fall -- the theme of which was "Bridging the Gap" -- President Nixon said: "Young people today, every survey shows, are more generously committed to human betterment through voluntary service than any generation before you. Your own work in 4-H has shown what mountains that commitment

can move. I urge you (young people) to redouble it, to share it, to maintain it throughout your lives... We need your (young people's) ideas. We need them in the national debate on issues, goals and directions."

The President stated: "Certainly the time when the young are to be seen and not heard is gone in America -- and gone for good."

This seminar can chart the course for an expanded role of youth in community development. The Extension Service at the national level needs your ideas -- your colleagues and administrators in the States need them. All of us want to hear of your experiences. We hope you will gain new insights into the problems and opportunities in this "wide open" educational field during this week here in Washington.

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